



*Feast of St. Matthew
Vigil
September 20, 2023*

*Evening Prayer &
Holy Eucharist*

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Lynchburg, Virginia

MATTHEW APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST (21 SEP NT)

One day Jesus was walking and saw a tax collector named Matthew sitting at a tax collection post, and said to him, "Follow me." And Matthew stood up and followed Him, and became one of His twelve apostles. Tax collectors in those days were social outcasts. Devout Jews avoided them because they were usually dishonest (the job carried no salary, and they were expected to make their profits by cheating the people from whom they collected taxes). Patriotic and nationalistic Jews hated them because they were agents of the Roman government, the conquerors, and hated them with a double hatred if (like Matthew) they were Jews, because they had gone over to the enemy, had betrayed their own people for money. Thus, throughout the Gospels, we find tax collectors (publicans) mentioned as a standard type of sinful and despised outcast. Matthew brought many of his former associates to meet Jesus, and social outcasts in general were shown that the love of Jesus extended even to them.

(Jesus numbered among his disciples persons of widely different backgrounds. They included not only Matthew, a former agent of the Roman government, but Simon the Zealot (not to be confused with Simon Peter). Josephus tells us that the Zealots were fanatical nationalists, determined to drive out the Romans by guerrilla tactics, ambushes, assassinations, terrorist methods, or whatever worked. Their motto was, "No king but Messiah, no tax but the Temple, no friend but the Zealot." It is not clear that Simon was, or had been, a member of the group that Josephus describes, but it seems clear that he would have regarded himself as at the opposite end of the political spectrum from Matthew.)

The name "Matthew" means "gift of the LORD." Mark and Luke, in the story of his calling, name him "Levi." Perhaps this was his original name, and he received a new name from Jesus when he became a disciple. (It has also been suggested that he was simply a member of the tribe of Levi.)

Of Matthew's life after Pentecost the Scriptures tell us nothing. Later accounts of his life vary, some reporting that he was martyred, others that he died a natural death. The Christian community since early times has commemorated him as a martyr.

Whether the Apostle Matthew is also the Evangelist Matthew -- that is, whether the Apostle Matthew wrote the Gospel that bears his name -- is disputed. The Gospel itself does not say who wrote it, but the designation "according to Matthew" is very old. In favor of his authorship it may be noted that (1) while Mark and Luke give the

fourth pair of Apostles as “Matthew and Thomas,” the Gospel of Matthew gives them as “Thomas and Matthew”; and (2) while Luke 5:29 explicitly states, and Mark 2:15 suggests, that Matthew gave a banquet for Jesus, Matthew 9:10 in describing the same banquet does not indicate who the host was. Both of these variations would be routine touches of modesty if Matthew was the author.

On the other hand, the gospel (1) does not have the manner of an eyewitness, and (2) is thought by many scholars to contain material borrowed from Mark, whereas one would not expect someone who had been an eyewitness to borrow from someone who had not. (NOTE: The view that Mark is an older Gospel than Matthew is widespread and not long ago many scholars regarded the matter as settled. However, there is respectable opinion holding that Matthew is the earliest Gospel after all. See, for example, the comments in the Matthew volume of The Anchor Bible.)

Perhaps the Gospel was written by some early Christian, not an apostle, whose name was Matthew, and about whom nothing else is known. Early Christian readers, hearing the Gospel ascribed to “Matthew,” would naturally associate it with the Apostle of that name, and so the ascribing of the work to the Apostle Matthew becomes common at an early date, by a perfectly natural misunderstanding.

Papias of Hierapolis, writing in the late first or early second century, says that Matthew compiled the sayings (Logia) of Jesus in Hebrew. Now the material common to Matthew and Luke, but not to Mark, includes sayings of Jesus but almost no narrative. It has therefore been conjectured that there was once a document (usually called Q), now lost, that is basically a collection of speeches by Jesus, and that Matthew (the evangelist) and Luke, had access to it while Mark did not. It has been suggested that Matthew (the apostle) is the author of this document Q, which may well have been first written in Hebrew (or Aramaic).

The Scripture readings associated with the day bear the themes of Matthew as a Gospel-writer (hence readings that speak of the Scriptures), Matthew as an Apostle, and Matthew as a sinner called by God’s grace.

Preparation

Music for Meditation

Please stand at the sound of the bell.

Opening

Lord, open us to the sea of your mercy
and water us with full streams
from the riches of your grace
and the springs of your kindness.
Make us children of quietness and heirs of peace;
kindle in us the fire of your love
and strengthen our weakness by your power
as we become close to you and to each other.

From An Iona Prayer Book
Peter Millar, 1998 The Canterbury Press, Norwich, Eighth Impression

Confession

Please kneel or stand as you are able

Priest Let us ask God's forgiveness.

All **We come to you, Lord, for you alone can heal and restore us.
We are not able to heal ourselves.
We are not able to forgive ourselves.
We are not able to restore ourselves.
We are not able to sanctify ourselves.
We are not able to satisfy ourselves.
We come to you, Lord, for you alone can make us whole.**

From "The Open Gate: Celtic Prayers for Growing Spiritually"
David Adam

The Bishop when present, or the Priest, stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, ✠ forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

A Prayer for Evening

Lord Christ, enable me to place my trust in you,
and so to live in the present moment.
So often I forget that you long for peace
and healing my mind and heart.
Your song pierces even my darkest days,
and your hands are always, and everywhere,
the source of my journey into wholeness
and that inner springtime which is your gift alone,
Jesus, the risen one.

From An Iona Prayer Book
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Please be seated

WORD

The Readings

Silence is kept between the readings

II Timothy 3:14-17

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Matthew 9:9-13

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax-collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?' But when he heard this, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.'

PRAYER

Please kneel or stand as you are able

The Psalmist says:

The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. (Psalm 145:2)

God of the blessed, we praise you, for mercy shown, grace given, living water, Spirit's power. We ask you for daily strength, hope for tomorrow, your word to guide, strong feet to follow.

silence is kept

God of compassion

People **Hear our prayer**

God of the oppressed we bring to you the broken ones, forgotten ones, exploited and abused ones. Bring freedom and release, love and compassion to damaged hearts and souls,

silence is kept

God of compassion

People **Hear our prayer**

God of the distressed, we bring to you the grieving ones, hurting ones, suffering and wounded ones. Bring wholeness and healing comfort and relief, to broken bodies and minds

silence is kept

God of compassion

People **Hear our prayer**

God of the dispossessed we bring to you the lonely ones, the homeless ones, thirsty, tired and penniless ones. Bring hope and sustenance physical and spiritual food, to hungry bodies and souls.

silence is kept

God of compassion

People **Hear our prayer**

We thank you, heavenly Father, for the witness of your apostle and evangelist Matthew to the Gospel of your Son our Savior; and we pray that, after his example, we may with ready wills and hearts obey the calling of our Lord to follow him; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.
May the peace, love and compassion of the Lord
Be with you now and always. AMEN

The Peace

Christ, the Good Shepherd, bind us with a bond of love that cannot be broken.
My sisters and brothers, the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Eucharist

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them to the Lord.**

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

The Celebrant continues

Glory and honor and praise to you, holy and living God. To deliver us from the power of sin and death and to reveal the riches of your grace, you looked with favor upon Mary, your willing servant, that she might conceive and bear a son, Jesus the holy child of God. Living among us, Jesus loved us. He broke bread with outcasts and sinners, healed the sick, and proclaimed good news to the poor. He yearned to draw all the world to himself yet we were heedless of his call to walk in love. Then, the time came for him to complete upon the cross the sacrifice of his life, and to be glorified by you.

On the night before he died for us, Jesus was at table with his friends. He took bread, gave thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to them, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine. Again, he gave thanks to you, gave it to them, and said: “Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.”

Now gathered at your table, O God of all creation, and remembering Christ, crucified and risen, who was and is and is to come, we offer to you our gifts of bread and wine, and ourselves, a living sacrifice.

Pour out your Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Body and Blood of Christ. Breathe your Spirit over the whole earth and make us your new creation ✠, the Body of Christ given for the world you have made.

In the fullness of time bring us, with St. Paul and all your saints, from every tribe and language and people and nation, to feast at the banquet prepared from the foundation of the world.

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. AMEN.

The Lord’s Prayer

The Breaking of the Bread

A period of silence is kept

The Fraction Anthem

Celebrant We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

People **We who are many are one body, for we all share the one bread.**

The Invitation

Celebrant This is the table, not of the Church, but of the Lord. It is made ready for those who love him and for those who want to love him more. So, come, you who have much faith and you have little, you who have been here often and you who have not been here long, you who have tried to follow and you who have failed. Come, because it is the Lord who invites you. It is his will that those who want him should meet him here.

The Post Communion Prayer

Celebrant Let us pray.

Please kneel or stand as you are able

All **Lord Jesus Christ, you have put your life into our hands; now we put our lives into yours. Take us, renew us and remake us. What we have been is past; what we shall be, through you, still awaits us. Lead us on. Take us with you. Amen.**

Lord, you have welcomed us,
You have healed us
You have restored us
You have fed us
You have empowered us.
Send us out
to live and work to your glory.
Send us out
to declare your Presence.
Send us out
to declare your love.
Send us out
to proclaim your goodness.
This day and always.

The Open Gate: Celtic Prayers for Growing Spirituality,
David Adam. Morehouse Publishing, ©1995

The Dismissal & Blessing

Celebrant May joy and nothing less find you on the way.

May you be blessed and a blessing.

And may light guide you, and countless others all the way home. *Amen.*

The blessing of God Almighty, ✠ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you for ever. *Amen.*



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ST. PAUL'S MISSION STATEMENT

To Know Christ, To Worship Christ, To Serve Christ, To Make Him Known